

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing Of Claims:**

1.-22. (Canceled)

23. (New) A method for operating an internal combustion engine including a fuel-driven combustion motor, comprising:

delivering a fuel under pressure to the combustion motor via a fuel delivery system;

determining a pressure decay rate in the fuel delivery system; and

inferring a fault as a function of a comparison of the pressure decay rate with a predefined threshold value.

24. (New) The method as recited in Claim 23, further comprising:

regulating a fuel pressure to a setpoint;

for the case in which an actual pressure value does not reach the setpoint during a predefined time, recognizing a fault and determining the pressure decay rate in the fuel delivery system; and

determining a type of fault as a function of the comparison of the pressure decay rate with the predefined threshold value.

25. (New) The method as recited in Claim 24, further comprising:

initiating an emergency mode action as a function of the type of fault.

26. (New) The method as recited in Claim 23, further comprising:

recognizing a leak in the fuel delivery system in the event an absolute value of the pressure decay rate exceeds the predefined threshold value.

27. (New) The method as recited in Claim 26, further comprising:

shutting off the internal combustion engine once the leak in the fuel delivery system is recognized.

28. (New) The method as recited in Claim 27, further comprising:  
blocking a restarting of the internal combustion engine once the leak in the fuel delivery system is recognized.
29. (New) The method as recited in Claim 23, further comprising:  
recognizing a fault in the fuel supply system when an absolute value of the pressure decay rate falls below the predefined threshold value.
30. (New) The method as recited in Claim 29, further comprising:  
activating a limitation of a quantity of the fuel delivered once the fault in the fuel supply system has been recognized.
31. (New) The method as recited in Claim 23, further comprising:  
once the fault has been recognized, shutting off the internal combustion engine, regardless of a type of fault, when the internal combustion engine is operated at one of idle and at a low load below a predefined load threshold.
32. (New) The method as recited in Claim 23, further comprising:  
in order to determine the pressure decay rate:  
separating a high-pressure circuit from a low-pressure circuit of the fuel delivery system, and  
determining the pressure decay rate in the high-pressure circuit.
33. (New) The method as recited in Claim 23, further comprising:  
transmitting a warning message once the fault has been recognized.